



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Slovenia

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 7,827 square miles, and its population is approximately 1,964,036. Estimates of religious identification vary. According to the 2002 census, the numbers are: Roman Catholic, 1,135,626; evangelical, 14,736; other Protestant, 1,399; Orthodox, 45,908; other Christian, 1,877; Muslim, 47,488; Jewish, 99; Oriental, 1,026; other religion, 558; Agnostic, 271; Believer, but belongs to no religion, 68,714; unbeliever/atheist, 199,264; no reply, 307,973; unknown, 139,097.

The Orthodox and Muslim populations appear to correspond to the country's immigrant Serb and Bosniak populations, respectively. These groups tend to have a lower socioeconomic status in society.

Foreign missionaries, including a mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and other religious groups (including Hare Krishna, Church of Scientology, and the Unification Church) operate without hindrance.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

There are no formal requirements for recognition as a religion by the Government. Religious communities must register with the Government's Office for Religious Communities if they wish to be legal entities, and registration entitles such groups to rebates on value-added taxes. There are currently 40 religious communities officially registered, up from 36 in 2003. One case remained pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Registered religious groups, including foreign missionaries, may receive value-added tax rebates on a quarterly basis from the Ministry of Finance. All groups report equal access to registration and tax rebate status.

The appropriate role for religious instruction in schools continued to be an issue of debate. In 2004, several political parties proposed that religious instruction be made compulsory; however, the Ministry of Education rejected the initiative on the basis of existing legislation. The Constitution states that parents are entitled to give their children "a moral and religious upbringing." Only those schools supported by religious bodies taught religion.

After independence in 1991, Parliament passed legislation calling for denationalization (restitution or compensation)

within a fixed period. The law provides for denationalization of church properties--church buildings and support buildings, residences, businesses, and forests--that were nationalized after World War II by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. By March 31, 2005, the Government had completed 34,465 (90 percent) of the 38,156 denationalization claims filed. In 2004, the Government reallocated existing resources to reduce the backlog in cases, and there was improvement in speeding up resolution of cases.

The Roman Catholic Church was a major property holder in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before World War II. After the war, much church property was confiscated and nationalized by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Despite the Catholic Church's numerical predominance, restitution of its property remains a politically unpopular issue. In 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture issued a decree returning approximately 20,396 acres of forest in Triglav National Park to the Catholic Church; however, in 2002, the Ljubljana Administrative Court annulled this decree in response to multiple legal challenges. The Catholic Church challenged the annulment in the Supreme Court, and a portion of the forest lands was returned in late 2003. In March 2005, property located in eastern Slovenia was returned to the Catholic Church.

According to the Office for Religious Communities, it has been government policy since 1991 to pay the share of social insurance contribution for clergy and other full time religious workers that is normally paid by an employer.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Muslim community has experienced difficulty in receiving permission from the Government to build mosques.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

Societal attitudes toward religion are complex. Historical events dating from long before the country's independence color societal perceptions regarding the dominant Catholic Church. Much of the gulf between the (at least nominally) Catholic center-right and the largely agnostic or atheistic left stemmed from the massacre of large numbers of alleged Nazi and Fascist collaborators in the years 1946-48. Many of the so-called collaborators were successful businessmen whose assets were confiscated after they were killed or driven from the country, and many were prominent Catholics. After independence, right-of-center political groups called for a purge of communist government and business officials, but this call quickly was replaced by one for reconciliation. Since religious undertones today are minor and tangential, this issue no longer attracts much public attention.

Interfaith relations were generally amicable, although there was little warmth between the majority Catholic Church and foreign missionary groups that were viewed as aggressive proselytizers. Societal attitudes toward the minority Jewish, Muslim and Serb Orthodox communities generally were tolerant; however, some persons feared the possible emergence of Muslim fundamentalism. While there are no governmental restrictions on the Muslim community's freedom of worship, services commonly are held in private homes under cramped conditions.

There are no mosques in the capital of Ljubljana. The lack of a mosque has been due, in part, to a lack of Muslim community organization and to complex legislation and bureaucracy in construction and land regulations. The Muslim community has conceptual plans to build a new facility in Ljubljana. In 2001, the Ljubljana Municipality Council selected one of five potential sites that the city previously had identified for the facility and tasked the city's planning department to begin preparing the materials necessary to move ahead with the project. At the beginning of 2003, Ljubljana city officials expressed support for the Mosque and the location on which it was to be built. Plans for building the mosque were stalled in part because of discovery that part of the land the city identified as for sale to the Muslim community was subject to a denationalization claim by the Catholic Church. The Church has agreed to forgo its claim if the city will compensate it with another piece of property. At the end of the period covered by this report, negotiations were ongoing.

In early October 2004, a Jewish family grave was desecrated; police had not identified the perpetrators by the end of the period covered by this report. Such acts are extremely rare. However, Jewish community representatives reported prejudice, ignorance, and false stereotypes and negative images of Jews within society. Negative portrayals of Jews were common in private commentary, and citizens generally did not consider Jews to be a native population.

The Government promotes anti-bias and tolerance education through its programs in primary and secondary schools, with the Holocaust as an obligatory topic in the contemporary history curriculum. However, teachers have a great deal of latitude in deciding how much time to devote to it. The country formally joined in the Council of Europe's 2004 proclamation of May 9, as Holocaust Memorial Day. Schools carried out various activities to remember the Holocaust on May 9, for example, watching documentaries, writing assignments and holding discussions on the topic.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. Embassy has held extensive discussions with the Government on the topic of property denationalization in the context of the rule of law, although it has not discussed specifically church property. In addition, the Embassy has made informal inquiries into the status of the mosque construction project. The Embassy meets with members of all major religious communities, representatives of nongovernmental organizations that address religious freedom issues, and government officials from relevant offices and ministries.

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